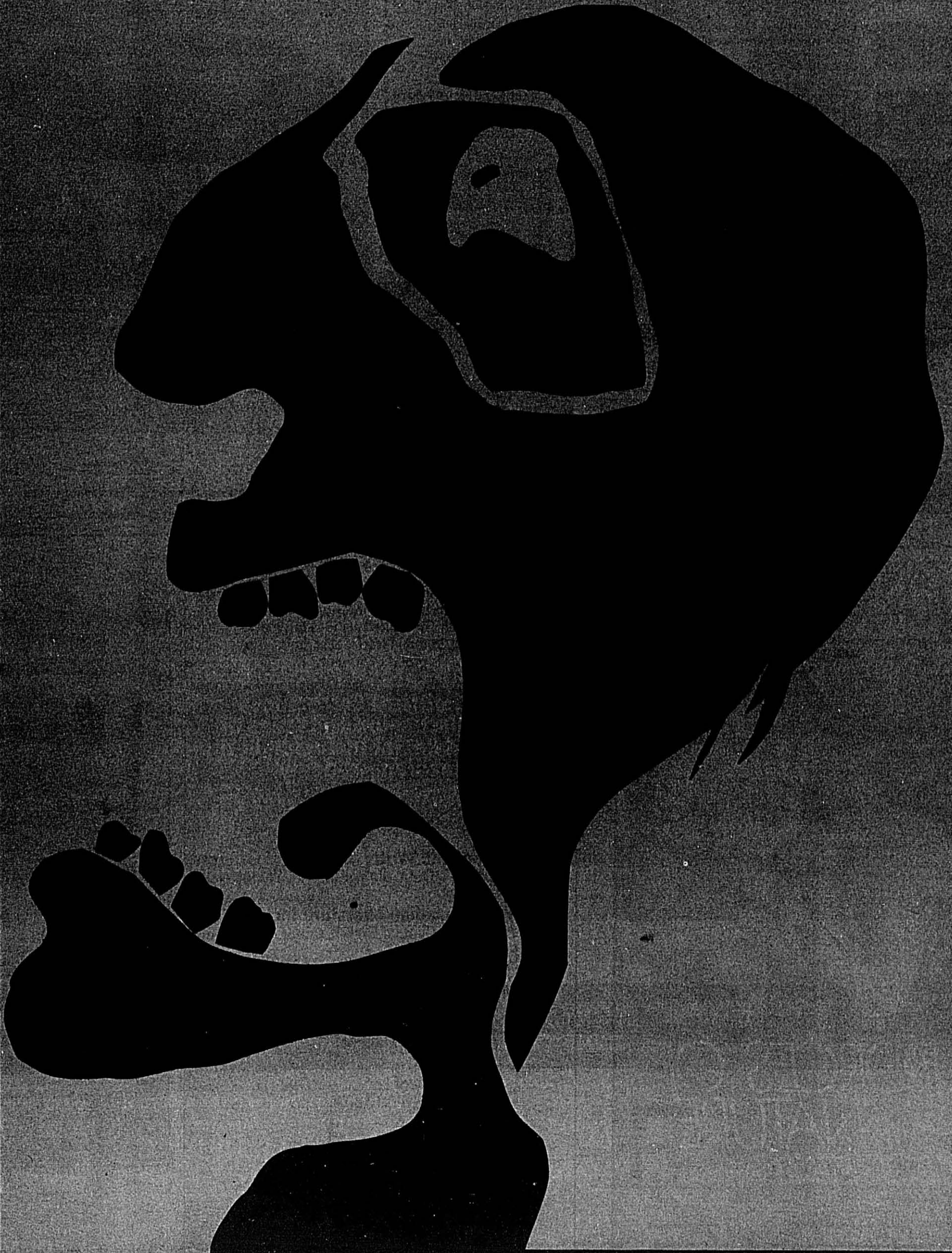


THE MCGILL DAILY CULTURE

VOLUME 88 ISSUE 61

MARCH 18, 1999

VOCABULATING 'TIL OUR GUNS BLEED SINCE 1911





SYMPOSIUM ON 20TH CENTURY GENOCIDES

March 22
6:00 PM

• Radio Broadcasting in the Incitement & Interdiction of Genocide •
Dr. Frank Chalk
Concordia University

March 22
7:30 PM

• The Holocaust in Comparative Perspective •
Dr. Robert Melson
Purdue University

March 22
9:00 PM

• The Armenian Genocide: patterns of destruction, patterns of denial •
Dr. Roger Smith
College of William & Mary

March 23
5:00 PM

• Genocide: What have we learned? What must we do? •
Dr. Irwin Cotler
McGill University

March 23
6:15 PM

• Genocide by Starvation: historical lessons of the Holodomor •
Dr. Roman Serbyn
U.Q.A.M.

March 23
7:30 PM

• The Conspiracy of Silence: completing genocide by its negation •
Mr. François Bugingo
CBC (Radio-Canada)

March 23
9:00 PM

• Panel Discussion •

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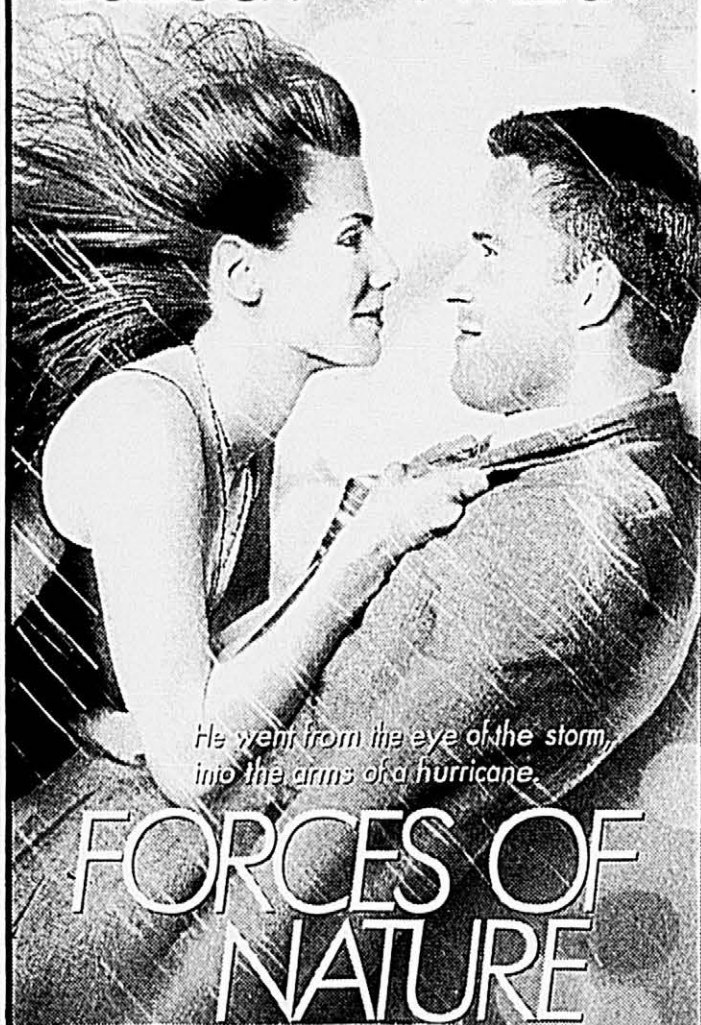
- 1) MRC-funded project: Cell-type-specific muscle gene regulation
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Contact: Ken Hastings, Montreal Neurological Institute
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Making Canadian Literature Inclusive
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The
McGILL
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volume 88 number 61

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thursday culture
meetings. 1:00 in
shatner b-03.

Erratum

The following quotation was wrongly attributed in Monday's *Operations Curbed at the Parc* feature article. The thoughts expressed were those of Cinema du Parc owner Thierry Martin.

[Martin] remained optimistic that he will be able to quell the pass holders' disappointment with his own rep house in a new location.

"We were absolutely broke. We were not in a position to refund the membership card. But we are hoping to reopen and honour the passes," he said, adding that he has already been approached by a number of parties interested in leasing him rep house space.

The Daily welcomes any and all comment, criticism, and letters to the editor. Please drop off at our office in B-03 Shatner, or email us at daily@generation.net, or fax us at 398-8318. Letters should be no more than 300 words.

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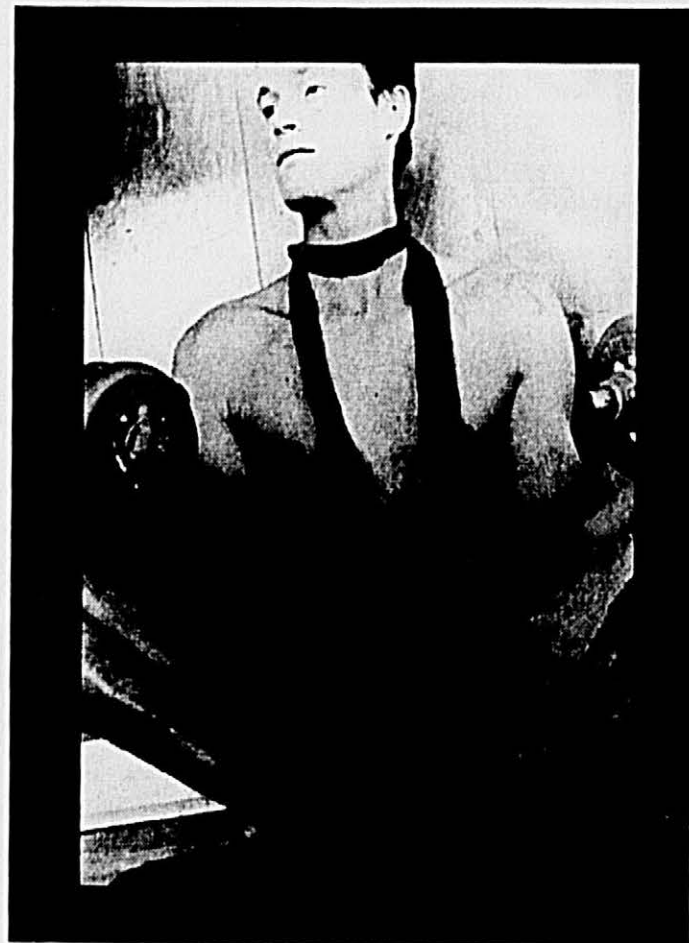


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My Country Beats On Me

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EXPOSES US HYPOCRISY

by Yassine Santissi

For the first time since its creation 38 years ago, Amnesty International has launched a human rights campaign against a Western democratic nation.

Although Amnesty International has traditionally targeted such countries as Algeria, China and Mexico, the list now includes the United States. Last weekend, at Amnesty International Canadian Universities' Conference, a workshop given by Mark Warren was solely devoted to highlighting the main issues of the campaign against the United States.

Human Rights Treaties

The first issue to be addressed was the failure of the United States to ratify important human rights treaties. Speaker Mark Warren noted that only two countries in the world failed to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a major human rights treatise. One of them was Somalia, which Warner states essentially lacks a government, and the other was the United States.

Treatment of Refugees

Of the human rights' treaties that the US has ratified, many have not been abided by, especially in its treatment of refugees. People arriving in the United States seeking asylum are frequently put in jails and treated as criminals before they receive a court decision on their case. Ironically, the US is a member of the UN High Commission for Refugees' Executive Committee which has agreed that the detention of asylum seekers "should normally be avoided" and allowed only if it is lawful and not arbitrary. (EXCOM Conclusion 44).

Yet, refugees in the US, as well as their children, are put in prison cells. A Somali refugee, who spent 14 months imprisoned before being granted asylum declared, "Everyone says America is the place for human rights. I thought I had arrived in the wrong country."

The United States often gives preferential treatment to refugees from certain countries, without

taking into consideration that other refugees may face greater danger in their home country and thus have a more urgent need for protection.

Warren cited the Reagan policy as an example. In the 1980s, refugees from Latin American countries with leftist regimes, such as Cuba, were welcomed with open arms. By doing so, the US attempted to decrease the legitimacy of the leaders of these countries. However, refugees from Latin American countries with rightist (dictatorship) regimes, which often the US had helped to set up, such as Pinochet's Chile, were frequently denied asylum. The claims that their basic human rights were suppressed in their home country were not recognized.

Treatment of Youth

Also raised at the conference was the juvenile death penalty. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the US has signed, clearly states in Article 6 that the "sentence of death shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age."

Although the US was instrumental in helping formulate this human rights convention, it does not follow it in several states. For example, in Texas, Joseph Cannon was killed by lethal injection in April 1998 for a crime he committed when he was seventeen. Even though he was a diagnosed schizophrenic and victim of child abuse, the jury chose to disregard these factors, deciding to inflict capital punishment.

Torture

The regular use of devices of torture was an additional area of concern for Amnesty International. Prison inmates are increasingly being strapped to a "stun belt", which is a device that can deliver a powerful electric shock at a push of a button up to a distance of 300 meters. Further, police officers are being supplied with laser guns that immobilize a suspect temporarily with a 50,000 volt electric shock. According to Amnesty International, there are numerous cases across

the US where the use of these devices is abused.

Police Brutality

Warren emphasized that police brutality is not confined to a handful of unique cases as law enforcement authorities and the media would like us to believe. Police brutality is a continuing fact in the US, as it is here in Canada. In August 1997, Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant, was the victim of a sodomite act at a Brooklyn police station where four NYPD officers rammed the handle of a toilet plunger into his rectum. In November 1997, Andre Burgess, a 17 year old African-American high school student, was shot to death by police officers because they thought the candy bar he was carrying was a gun. The record of police brutality simply goes on and on. And the fact of the matter is that more often than not, officers involved in these cases of police brutality are not charged with any offense.

Lessons and Changes

When asked about the fundamental changes brought about by this campaign, the speaker suggested that Amnesty International has gained more worldwide legitimacy. One conference participant also noted that the campaign is helping to reinforce the notion that human rights are a universal standard that does not only apply to Third World countries.

Amnesty International's Canadian Universities Seminar concluded with a peacefully staged protest at the US consulate which had the aim of vocalizing the issues at hand. Although most marginalized groups in the United States are well aware of their governments systemic breach of human rights, others remain unaware. What remains to be seen however is how Amnesty International publicity efforts will turn public knowledge into public action.

For further information on the Amnesty campaign against the USA, go to www.rightsforall-usa.org

SCENE

LOCALLY

by Tyler Hargreaves



RODRIGO THE HOT-DOG GUY

Name: Rodrigo

Occupation: Hot-Dog Vendor Outside Redpath Library

Topic: Spring

What is your favourite season?

Summer 'cause it is hot and you can go to the beach and do whatever you want.

What is the best thing about spring?

The beautiful green colours in the trees and the forest. I love it.

What is the worst thing about spring?

It's not that hot. In Chile when spring comes you can go to the beach no problem, but here you can't do anything. We are almost in spring now but it is still cold and we still have snow.

Does business improve in the spring?

It improves a lot...it is the best season. Maybe 'cause it is still cold and they want a hot dog to warm up and sit in the sun.

What are the advantages to living in a part of the world with such a distinct cycle of seasons?

You can do a lot of different sports. Where I come from it is almost always summer and you can play soccer or go to the beach but you can't go skiing or skate and you can do that here which is great.

What is your best memory of spring?

Playing soccer in the park in my country when I was six year's old and in Mexico too when I spent time there.

Why does a young man's fancy turn to thoughts of love in the spring?

That's a tricky question. Maybe 'cause of all the colours and how it gets so beautiful. And everyone stops wearing jackets and dressing nice 'cause it's not cold anymore.



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• The **KAY MACIVER MEMORIAL PRIZE**, worth \$275, for the best English essay by an undergraduate on a subject in the field of English Canadian or French Canadian literature, to be nominated by instructors.

Creative Writing

• The **MONA ADILMAN PRIZE IN POETRY**, worth \$650—or \$325 for two students, is open to undergraduate or graduate students registered in the Faculty of Arts for the best poem or group of poems relating to ecological or environmental concerns.

• The **CLARK LEWIS MEMORIAL PRIZE**, worth \$250, is open to major or honours students in the Department of English. The prize is awarded annually or from time to time for original plays staged in the course of the academic year.

• The **CHESTER MACNAGHTEN PRIZES IN CREATIVE WRITING** (two prizes, one of \$500 and another of \$350) are open to undergraduate students of the university for the best piece of creative writing in English, i.e. a story, a play, a poem, an essay, etc. Printed compositions are ineligible if they have been published before April 15, 1999.

• The **PETERSON MEMORIAL PRIZE**, worth \$1,500, is open to undergraduate or graduate students registered in a degree program in the Department of English.

• The **LIONEL SHAPIRO AWARDS FOR CREATIVE WRITING**, three prizes of \$1,000 each, to be distributed if possible among the genres of poetry, fiction, screen writing and playwrighting. Each prize to be awarded on the recommendation of the Department of English to students in the final year of the B.A. course who have demonstrated outstanding talent. (A note from your academic adviser verifying you will have completed your program requirements and the minimum credits required by the Faculty of Arts (by April 1999) MUST accompany your submission.)

These competitions are restricted to students who have not previously won the First Prize.

Forms to be completed (for the creative writing prizes and awards) are available in the Department of English General Office, Arts 155. Submissions must be in duplicate.

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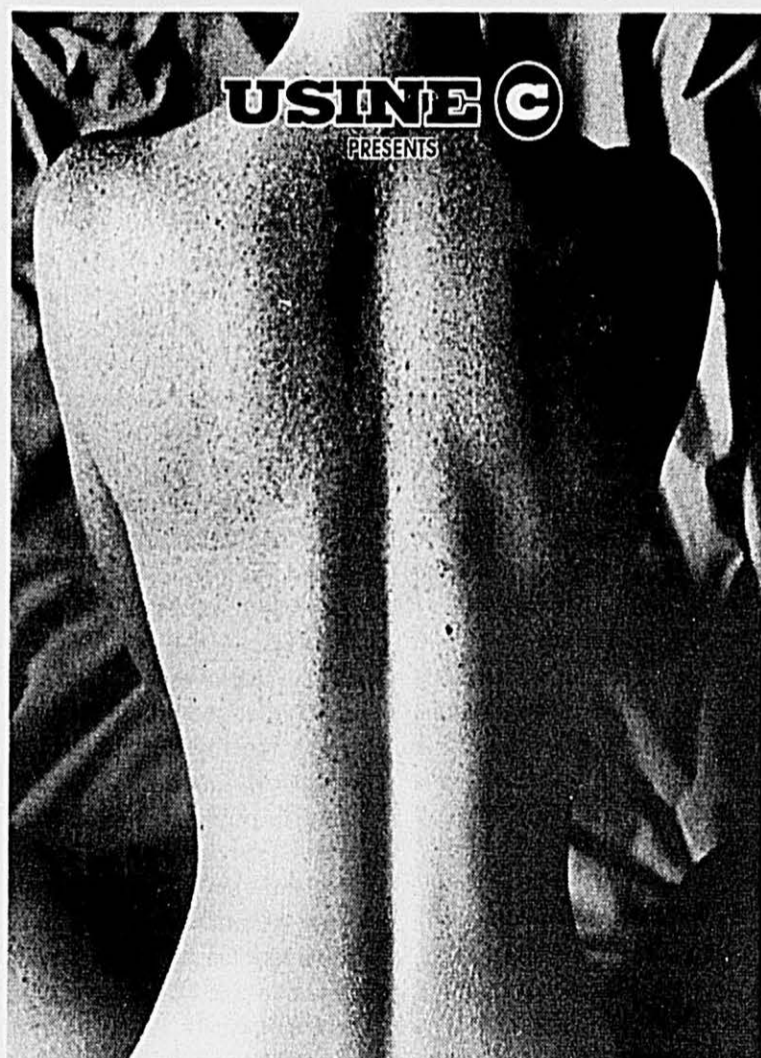
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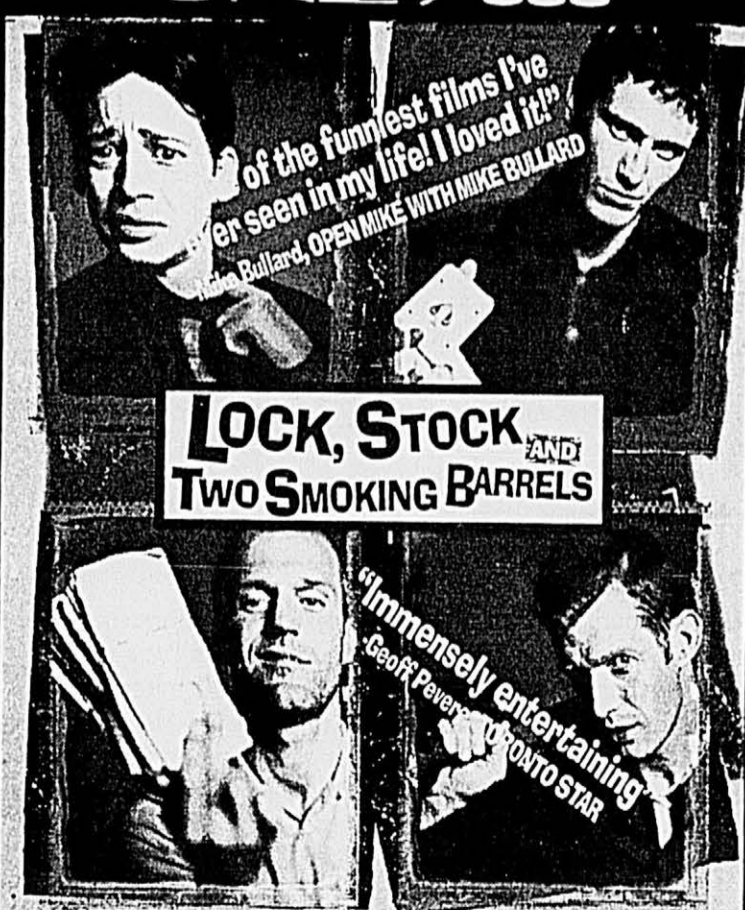
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IS NOTHING SACRED?

by Tal Pinchevsky

Few would ever consider countering the claim that Pope John Paul II is a man who through his presence alone is among the greatest leaders, spiritual or otherwise, in the world today. In a world that is becoming more and more secular to the point of almost widespread agnosticism, it is somewhat refreshing and almost reassuring to see that such a solemn man can demand such attention wherever he goes. It is surprising, if not impressive, to see the droves of worshippers who come out to see the pontiff during his visits.

For most Catholics, the opportunity to see the Pope is the culmination of years of practising their religion. It is considered a dream for many to simply see their religious potentate from a distance. For those lucky ones who will be able to see him close up or even touch him, it is the thrill of a lifetime. For others, a visit by the Pope inspires a reexamination of one's religious faith, for better or for worse. For others still, such an event is viewed from afar with no other inspiration than the simple curiosity that such a reception for one person merits.

Shepherd One

The Pope's recent visit to St. Louis, Missouri in January truly puts the mass appeal of this figure in perspective. As expected, hundreds of thousands of people, both devout Catholics and cynics alike, came out for every John Paul moment from his transfer via Popemobile to the Kiel Center in downtown St. Louis, to his prayer service and youth rally at the Kiel Center (a venue more often reserved for rock concerts and sporting events), to the massive youth walk down Market Street. The Pope wasn't even present at the latter event, he was boarding his TWA plane Shepherd One - yes that is what his plane is called - in Mexico City. For a

march to take place solely as preparation for the arrival of one person indicates the extent to which the Pontiff's power is felt.

An even more impressive example comes from a far more a-religious pop culture perspective which, in this case measures mass appeal by press coverage. This past September, Mark McGwire's 62 home runs were completely dissolved by the media on an international scale and deemed as divine an achievement as is possible for an athletic achievement that bears absolutely no semblance to anything remotely evangelical. In contrast, by Thanksgiving, around the time that the Pope's visit to St. Louis was announced, more than twice the number of press credentials than were requested to cover

been downplayed somewhat over the past ten years or so, but the Pope's recent visit to Mexico indicates a crossroads in the Papacy's path indicating that although it is extremely holy, it might not be especially sacred anymore.

As usual, the Pope's trip to Mexico City garnered mass media attention and the massive crowds that would normally follow the Pontiff's cavalry. The primary difference between this and other visits from the Pope is related to the so-called "Air Jordan Factor." On this four-day trip to Mexico, His Holiness was able to attract a vast group of "official sponsors" including Pepsi, Federal Express, Sheraton Hotels, Kodak, Hewlett-Packard, and Mercedes Benz. These sponsors were said to aid

The primary shock regarding these sponsorships is not that it is the first time someone has attempted to make money off the Pontiff, but it is the first time His Holiness has received a cut of the profits.

Mark McGwire had been designated for the Pope's visit.

So we have already established that His Holiness is all things to all people. After all, his titles include Sovereign of Vatican City, Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Christ, and Primate of Italy. Even more impressive is the way in which the Pope and the Papacy have been able to maintain this universal faith, although some would prefer to call it popularity, over the course of a century that has changed in ways that has made Leftists more populist and the ideals of the Church seem fairly outdated. This integrity has

in the estimated two-million-dollar cost of the visit to Mexico. Many critics of this corporate sponsorship claim that not only is it absolutely outrageous, but also unnecessary as the Mexican government is believed to have adequate resources to pay for the visit.

Is there any doubt that any one of these sponsorships, let alone all of them together, does little to bolster the reputation of the Pope? A simple evaluation of the products being peddled by the Catholic church shows that they are wares that have no role, fulfilling or otherwise, in the day to day procedures of

A simple evaluation of the products being peddled by the Catholic church shows that they are wares that have no role, fulfilling or otherwise, in the day to day procedures of the Pope.

the Pope. Common sense alone dictates that the Pontiff probably does not drink Pepsi, use Kodak film, use any Hewlett-Packard office equipment, or drive a Mercedes. The latter of these statements is further supported by the fact that the Pope doesn't drive at all. The Pope would not contribute a sound byte to deny or acknowledge this Papal life bereft of any corporate interplay, yet a simple realist perspective would discredit any images of the spiritual leader of the Catholic church having a Pepsi with say, a giant bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Las Papas del Papa

The sponsorship bringing the most latent controversy is that of Mexican snack food company Sabritas, which is owned by Frito Lay which in turn is owned by PepsiCo Inc. who also own Kentucky Fried Chicken. The company has placed stamp-sized pictures of John Paul II and the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's patron saint, in every bag of Ruffles potato chips. For an extra 2 pesos, about 30 Canadian cents, you can buy a special commemorative frame to display the entire 10-picture collection. This far from innovative marketing ploy displays for the most avid chip connoisseurs the

image of John Paul II holding up the collection set and encouraging all those watching him to "collect all ten," something that is no doubt both frightening and depressing. Mexican media is satirically playing on the word "papa," which in Spanish means both potato and pope, referring to Sabritas as "Las Papas del Papa" - the Potatoes of the Pope.

Obviously the tenure and good nature of the Pope is not to be challenged here. He is still a man worthy of the widespread adulation that he attracts. His papal ideals have not shifted in any way and it is unlikely that he will soon commence an address with a ten-minute rant telling us why abortion is bad and Fritos are good. There is no doubt, however, that the dignity and the integrity of the church are being seriously threatened with this trend towards corporate aid. It is impossible to predict where this sponsorship may lead. As it is now, the Pope has a fairly intense schedule leading up to the turn of the millennium where he will no doubt give a stirring and commercial-free address. Bear in mind, however that John Paul II is in the twilight of his "regime" and a new Pope will no doubt be inaugurated within the next ten to fifteen years. It is with this new and hypothetical Pope that the opportunity for

the catholic church jockeys for the choice of a ***new generation***

full corporate saturation of the church becomes a far more viable possibility. The primary shock regarding these sponsorships is not that it is the first time someone has attempted to make money off the Pontiff, but it is the first time His Holiness has received a cut of the profits.

To evaluate this profiteering on a much smaller scale, one can return to the Pope's trip to St. Louis that followed his Mexican visit. To celebrate this solemn occasion, a series of mugs, t-shirts, and bumper stickers have been made available in numerous gift shops and even on-line. The inscription on these products is obviously deeply religious in meaning and creative in marketing, saying "Pope John Paul II came to St. Louis and all I got was this lousy mug(t-shirt, etc.)." One can only laugh at this approach to Catholicism that is so secular that religion plays absolutely no role in the inspiration nor the marketing of these products.

Of a nature founded far more in the spirit of religious faith, John Paul II: The Pope of the Rosary, is a 2-CD or 2 cassette album available from Vatican Radio, endorsed by the Pope and available in seven languages. The album is said to "offer the listener the full prayer of the rosary and religious reflections of Pope John Paul II on the Christian life and gospel values." The album also includes selections of music performed by the Vatican Radio Choir. Nobody is being outwardly exploited in this instance, but there just seems to be a fundamental quandary in profiting off of the sincere gospel of a good man that has dedicated his life to his practice, through which earns absolutely no profit.

The Virtual Vatican

This appears to be a spillover of sorts from the creation of the Vatican Television Center (CTV), which was created in 1983 and whose principal aim is "to contribute to spreading the universal mes-

lets, fairly recently linked directly to the Vatican, are the primary characteristics of a process of modernization that parallels the same process the rest of the world has witnessed over the course of the twentieth century. So is corporate sponsorship simply the next logical step in this process or is there a fine line that should not be crossed? According to Mexico City's archbishop,

Cardinal Norberto Rivera, who approved the sponsorship program, "we live in an age of advertising and we are men of that age."

Other church officials, however, have made contrary statements. Bishop Trinidad Gonzalez Rodriguez from Guadalajara, who helped coordinate the Pope's visit, has been openly against the sponsorship campaign and has stated "we made a mistake and we are

paying

We've a lot of criticism and there are jokes all over the newspaper."

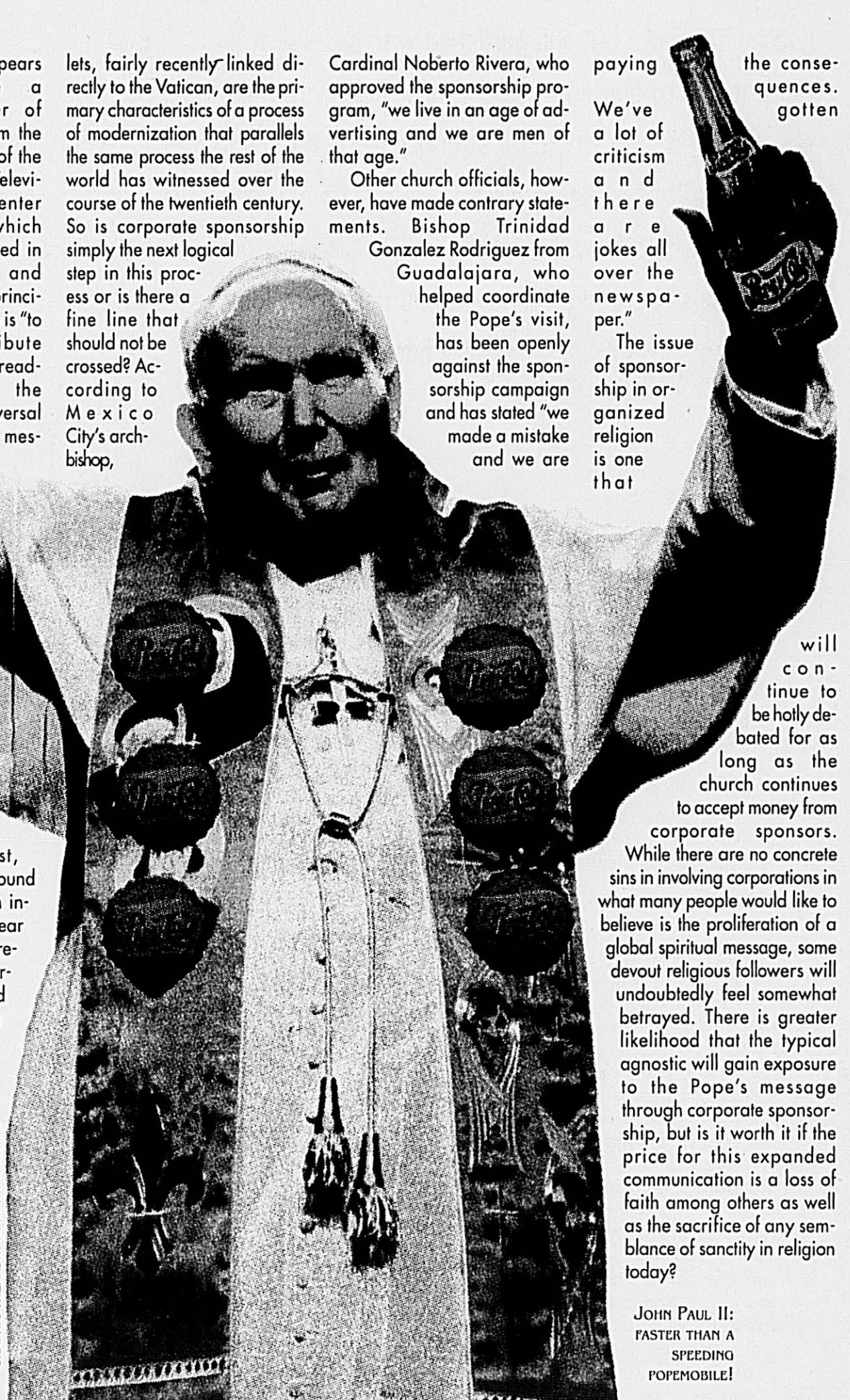
The issue of sponsorship in organized religion is one that

the consequences. gotten

of the Gospel by using television to document the Pope's pastoral ministry and the activities of the Apostolic See" (from the Statute of June 1st, 1998). CTV conducts around 130 live broadcasts from inside the Vatican every year as well as live broadcasts related to the Pope's numerous trips around the world and daily coverage of the Holy Father and the main events that take place within his daily routine in the "Apostolic See." This is in addition to Vatican Radio, which was founded on February 12th, 1931. Today, Vatican Radio beams worldwide programs in 34 languages sent out on short wave, medium wave, FM, and satellite.

There is no doubt that these media out-

GRAPHIC WIZARDRY BY AMY PAPAELIAS



will continue to be hotly debated for as long as the church continues to accept money from corporate sponsors.

While there are no concrete sins in involving corporations in what many people would like to believe is the proliferation of a global spiritual message, some devout religious followers will undoubtedly feel somewhat betrayed. There is greater likelihood that the typical agnostic will gain exposure to the Pope's message through corporate sponsorship, but is it worth it if the price for this expanded communication is a loss of faith among others as well as the sacrifice of any semblance of sanctity in religion today?

JOHN PAUL II:
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Creative Space

turtle & hare

mario said why should we keep searching i know i want to be with you
i want to marry you lets get married lets live together even if i need
you more than you need me. mary said we will see. in the meantime she
lived with mario but she gardened with several others because mario
did not like to garden or cut grass or help with building a new dock so
she procured men who did. stronger men. men who took care of
everything in that department. one day mary spent longer than she
should have by the water, the water level rose and she was swallowed
under. most mornings she wakes up nauseous, looking for dry soil to
kick up so she can make her way back to swampy land.

Paola Poletto

she walks everywhere

she walks everywhere in this new city. some days the wind
blusters round her head, and when she turns to face it, it
steals her breath from her throat. caught like that for an
instant, suspended breathless at the mercy of the wind, she
does not know if she will live or die. for a split second.

she keeps on walking through bands of steel that form across
her forehead and cheeks. crusts of ice on her scarf scrape her
chin. she cannot feel her legs but they continue to carry her
forward, amazingly. she learns the vulnerability of ears.

coming into this province she drank in the vistas of snow
with the eyes of a girl who grew up in the rain forest, the colour
of whose inner landscape was grey. though now, the sharp
patterns of sun on snow slice into her. broken glass in an
unknown vein.

Brigid Emery

like a cello

Come play
her like a cello
or the guitar
on your lap.
She will sing for you.
Enter together
the forest
of her solitude
and thrive.
She will pull off
your wool socks.
Cast off tomorrow
throw down
your anchor.
Create your utopia
to replace Eden
where sin is not
a word
in the dictionary.

Emily Pohl-Weary

poems. pictures. short
stories. prose. feed them
all to pete's box at the
daily office (shatner b-03)

The Cool Tone of Sensuousness

EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION IN THE PAINTINGS OF MARION WAGSCHAL

by Roberta A Capelovitch

A visit to the Galerie de Bellefeuille's current exhibit of the paintings by Montréal artist Marion Wagschal allows one to encounter a unique aesthetic and artistic vision - one defined by the contrast between the subtle tones of the artist's palette which is dominated by whites and greys, and her sensuous, expressionist rendering of flesh, of textured surfaces and human expression.

Wagschal presents a series of works in acrylics on canvas, all of which focus on the human face and figure. The paintings include "close-ups", framed in the painter's equivalent of a snapshot, and larger canvases filled by their human subjects. It is clear that the artist is fascinated by the diversity and complexity of her subjects, all of whom she knows, and their multidimensional range of inner emotions and dispositions. The frontally situated human faces and figures create a strong sense of immediacy and allow for a direct relationship between the viewer and subject.

Attachment

Of the larger works, perhaps the most arresting is *Attachment*.



WOMAN WITH STILL LIFE

The picture creates a visual tension between the positioning of the male and female figures. A man seated outdoors on a bench or settee is in profile, facing right and looking down. He is bare-chested and his legs are covered by a sheet which drapes over the bench and dominates the right half of the picture. A woman, wearing a thin nightgown, crouches, with her arms stretched upward around the man's neck. She does not look at him but downward and to the left.

While both figures are rendered in the same almost monochromatic grey and white tones, the failure of their glances to meet or even look in the same direction sets them apart. At first, the kneeling woman might appear to occupy a position of weakness, but she is painted with a strength and solidity that belie such a label. Aided by the size of the painting and the monumentality such size suggests, her subjects transcend their specific identities to embody generalized situations and meanings.

Fabrics and materials also create interesting surfaces for Wagschal's brush. The white sheet which dominates the right side of *Attachment* shows Wagschal's acute ability to transform a surface, in this case a sheet. The luminous geometrical rendering of each fold in the material create out of cloth the appearance of a geological surface. Sunlit chalk cliffs seem to emerge from the folds, adding to the archetypal dimension of the work.

Caryatid Portrait

Such archetypal suggestion occurs more overtly in *Caryatid Portrait* which takes as its subject a woman with a strong

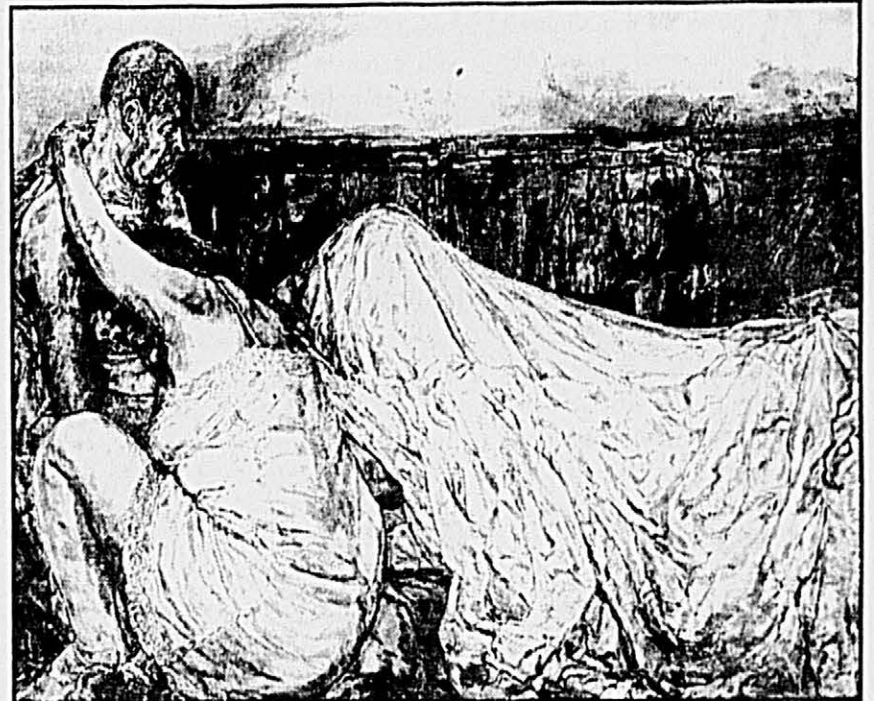
face. She is seated and leaning back, surrounded by a loosely draped flowing white dress. Caryatids were a style of column carved in the shape of women and used by the Greeks to hold up temples. When I spoke with Marion Wagschal at the opening of her show and over the phone the next evening, she made this significance very contemporary.

"We are at a period in history where social forces are quite difficult for the individual to deal with. We live in a competitive society. Economic, social and political forces constrain the individual. Many oppressive forces are at play so the woman is both free and trapped at the same time."

Wagschal also emphasized her subject's strength: "I was inspired by the Greek Caryatid, the image of a woman supporting an edifice, a structure. So the woman I was painting represents a woman who has a lot of energy, a woman who is trying to expand her boundaries and occupy a larger space in the world.... Her expression shows that she has a lot of strength and energy. She shows a desire to evolve and expand herself.... I see her as a very powerful woman. She has pride in herself and her body."

Fabric as Vital Texture

Visually, *Caryatid Portrait* reflects a contrast between the stasis and solidity of the body and the white, flowing and shimmering material which surrounds her. Cloth and fabric take on specific formal values. For Wagschal, "Drapery is a place of energy, a place where things are fluctuating and moving wildly. I like the drapery to function as a river, as something fluid, irrational and unpredictable. It may express something psychological about the character, but I love the way it works visually: the puckers of the body contrasted to the solid volumes of the body. I find it interesting to have shifts in differences between different kinds of surfaces in the painting. The movement from skin to cloth pro-



ATTACHMENT

vides those differences in surface. These effects can work differently in each painting."

Woman with Still Life

The visual impact of material makes itself felt in *Woman with Still Life*, the only picture in the exhibit dominated by vibrant colour. Wearing a vivid red and orange dress with a shawl, the material embroidered with shiny metallic inserts, a seated woman stares downward to the left. She is facing a dark brown skull on a brown table surface that is tilted to the right. The vibrant colours of the dress contrast with the muted tones of white hair and face.

Wagschal deliberately did not add pigment to the face and hair in order to allow them to balance with the vivid colouring of the cloth. "I was interested in having the face draw you in through its psychological qualities," she explained. "[It is] a challenge to have a face be powerful enough when she is overwhelmed by the colours of the garments."

"Certain formal elements excite me," Wagschal elaborated, "There is a physical, static and earthbound element to the figure which contrasts with the physical liquefaction of her clothing. I enjoy that tension and energy. Here, the cloth takes on a life of



CARYATID PORTRAIT

its own although it is also a metaphor for a person's energy.

Portraits of Men

In Wagschal's gallery of human subjects weariness is not limited to women and nor is the sensuous rendering of flesh and material. In *Raincoat Portrait*, the male subject is seated with his shirt open to reveal his chest. It creates a similar contrast between the solidity of the male figure and the edgy, alive movement of material. While the man seems to be at rest and reclines backward, the pose is suggestive: he conveys vigour and sexual energy.

(continued on page 10)

FLICKS FROM THE SWAMP

Autumnal Patriarchs

by Claus Von Swamp

THE CELEBRATION, CANNES AND THE OSCAR FORMAL COMPLEX

My stomach trumpets gusto at the slightest whisper of nausea. My nose is much too large. I have trouble identifying colours. My nails are chewed to the marrow of too-brittle bones that snap like dry willows at a slender breeze or uproar. A more temperate climate, like the South of France, could add years to my tired, deflated and diminutive body. But somehow, I've always found myself in cold countries whose constitution is as weak as my own. I drag the bag called me out of bed each day by telling myself I'm still as smart as a banana split.

The Celebration was shot in a grainy camcorder close up, evoking the works of the 1960's and early 70's French cinema, when

movies finally mustered an Avant Garde. The movie begins with a return to the home of a clan of hotel-restaurateurs, ruled by their father, Helge. Old family tensions and new aggression explode at the dinner table as servants and prodigal brood pour out their guts in the toasts between courses, with uncles, aunts and grandparents looking on chewingly. The plot reveals the murderous, incestual legacy of a cruel patriarch, on the very night of his great tribute - his sixtieth birthday. Despite the colossal revelations, the port and stewed venison continue, as the rules of propriety precede those of human feeling. Pestering my eyeballs with *cinéma vérité* grain, confounding my spatial sense with whirling pans, threatening my shaky belief in the worth of hu-

man existence and the health of my incipient conservatism: these are the accomplishments of Thomas Vinterberg's heavily disturbing little movie. It has panache.

Last year at Cannes, this low-budget Danish movie picked up a Special Jury Prize. Cannes is many things, but from an economic standpoint, its primary function is as a litmus test for distribution. You will never see 90% of the films made in foreign nations. The tenth you do see only get picked up by North American distributors if they've won heavy silverware at Venice, Berlin and especially Cannes. Don't kid yourself - this is a censoring process.

If one can easily say that foreign movies exceed pop movies in style and quality, it's just because we only have access to the

very top films made abroad. While you will hear about every shitty Hollywood movie, the vast majority of foreign movies remain invisible. Cannes is an integral part of this scheme. It is the "inclusive" disguise of a policy designed to exclude foreign films from the huge American market.

I always loved the Oscars. I love the pageantry and self-aggrandizement. I love that the Academy Awards will take a movie, a singular monad, and link it up to an entire tradition in a way that no other celebration can pull off for the other arts. Who wins what and whether they deserve it really isn't the point. What the Oscars do for us is invent the scheme that American movie making is a collective endeavour for all time, taking a series of instants and making them a coherent history. Winning an Oscar is like becoming a "made" man in the Mafia.

What bothers me about the Academy Awards is the baggage that comes along with this admirable project. The thesis behind the whole Oscar complex seems to be that a movie is a disassemblable series of parts, components extractable from the whole, that are examined and accorded independent levels of merit. Though Oscar makes all movies one big project, it also makes each movie a lego construction. This a formal system in American movies, just as the *Poetics* is to tragedy. For contention in the arena of canonization, a movie *must*, for example, have a leading man and leading woman whose performances must lend themselves

to decontextualization. The tacit heterosexism of this dramatic scheme and underlying message about the types of plots that qualify as "real" film stories are problematics housed in the Oscar party line. Odds are, what you'll get is an overarching trend towards heterosexual love stories starring iconic or pre-canonized, expensive actors. Exactly the trend American movies bend towards.

The dissemblability factor immediately excludes such films as *The Celebration*, *Happiness* and Wong Kar-Wai's *Fallen Angels* (the very best film I saw this year). All these movies are perfectly crafted but none really lend themselves to the surgical categorical

appraisal system of Oscar. These are *coherent* films that resist standout elements. As a meek columnist whose writing has only one confirmed reader, my personal interest in more holistic and inclusive critical structures draws two millilitres of water compared to the Oscar Titanic.

Cannes and the Oscars have regressed into marketing devices, their adulation to mere advertising. The first disseminates "less-noticed" film workers. The second provides a coherence to art through time. But both of these institutions are, in their final analysis, saboteurs of the creative engine. They encourage particular styles and distribution patterns that bind the creativity of whole generations into the yoke of formal and industrial perpetuation.

One day, while I was lain up on account of my back, I read Garcia Marquez' phenomenal novel, *The Autumn of the Patriarch* all in one go. It's about a Latin American dictator-general in his last years: a caudillo who will simply not die, even when the small triumphs of his regime are outweighed by its brutality, suspicion and corruption. The curious thing was that even after I finished the novel, I expected the dictator at its centre to survive; that this novel would never end; that I would read this book forever. So does Helge's party continue in *The Celebration*. Although the very man being honoured is revealed to be a monster, even his betrayed children quietly continue to break bread with the terrible monarch.

The Cannes film festival has turned out to be a utility for the very hegemonic economic machine it was invented to oppose. The Academy Awards are ultimately another device through which a rigid code of constraints are superimposed upon all aspiring American filmmakers. None of the patriarchs are deposed, abandoned or even satisfactorily confronted. They just go on, unassailable.

We must learn to be deeply wary of both whom we celebrate and how they are celebrated; adulation is a political statement, never an aesthetic one.

How's that for a banana split?

The Celebration is playing at Loews.

the paintings of Marion Wagschal

(continued from page 9)

Wagschal asked her subject to wear several layers of clothing and deliberately posed him like "a flower beginning to unfurl....At the same time he is a man in mid life and an expression of weariness is imprinted on his face."

Perhaps the most arresting painting featuring a man is *Nude on a Coverlet*, a large canvas of a male subject sprawled sideways, with his back towards the viewer, his whole figure tilted at an odd vertical angle. The haunches and thighs are rendered in smooth monochromatic grey. As we move down the canvas toward the figure's shoulders, flesh tones begin to seep in.

Here again, Wagschal creates interesting textures and effects. The man's flesh appears like hardened leather: the wrinkles in his shoulders and folds of skin in his neck seem like the wrinkles in the surface of a treated animal hide. The material on which the man's figure is sprawled also shows how the artist is playing with texture as the surface hardens into one of crackled enamel. Nails scattered around the edge of the coverlet are meant to impart a sense of danger surrounding the naked form.

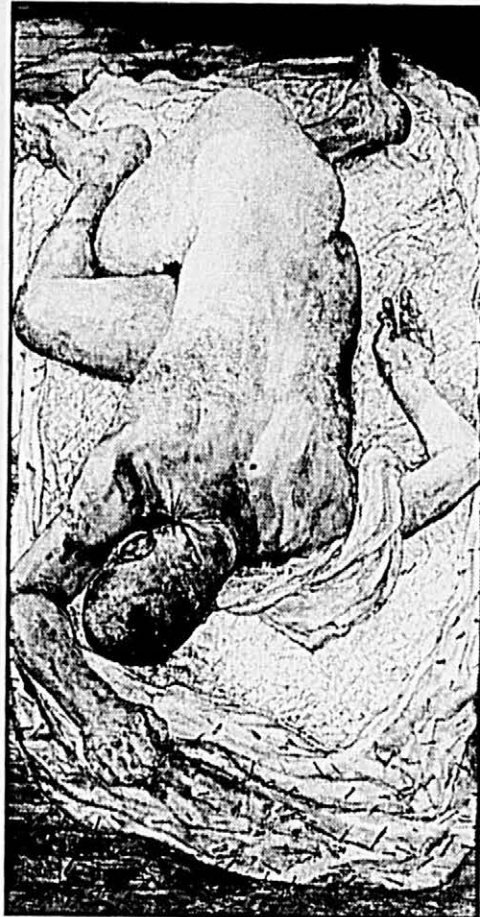
The Human Face, Flesh and Expression.

Wagschal's faces all embody strong and complex emotional states or states of consciousness.

Wagschal stated, "I like working against the cliché of intense emotion and strong colours and pastel colours as peaceful and placid....I also like looking at how a flesh pulls against a muscle and try to capture that movement." The artist clearly enjoys painting the details of flesh. She avoids slickness and works with a detailed and laboured brush stroke that often contrasts the pigment with small patches of empty surfaces.

Wagschal has included two small self-portraits in snapshot style. Each creates a textured surface of flesh that in no way resembles the smooth complexion of the artist. From this direct contrast between the reality of the subject and her self-expression, it is possible to conclude that the strong pulls of flesh and wrinkled, puckered surfaces of her work express the dispositional interiors of her subjects. Wagschal's brush stroke exaggerates her subjects' real appearance for expressive visual effect, to suggest the realities of inner experience.

The Bellefeuille Gallery's current exhibit of twenty paintings by Marion Wagschal provides a not-



NUDE ON A COVERLET

to miss opportunity to view the original work of a contemporary artist whose work will prove timeless.

Marion Wagschal's work is in the collections of the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts and the Musée d'art contemporain. The exhibit continues at Galerie de Bellefeuille (1367 Greene Avenue) until March 21. For more information call (514) 933-4406

daily classifieds

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EVENTS

Thursday March 18

Body Image Forum 1999 presents Beauty vs. Biology: How the media makes us go against what nature intended. 7 pm in Leacock 132. Followed by Fearless Food Feast in the Shatner Cafeteria. For more info call 398-2915 or e-mail jlefeb@po-box.mcgill.ca

CKUT by-law meeting. Learn about CKUT happenings! 4 pm Rm 425 Shatner.

RECLAIM (Reading Council for Literacy Advance in Montréal) and The Gazette present a benefit fundraiser for RECLAIM, A Broadway Review featuring The Lyric Theatre. 8 pm at Ogilvy's Tudor Hall

Panel Discussion on Biotechnology and Agriculture with Dr. R. Prichard, Dr. T. Bureay, Dr. P. Turcotte and I. Narayana, M.Sc. 7:30 pm in Leacock 232

Women's Studies Coffee House. 8 pm at the Yellow Door, 3625 Aylmer.

Friday March 19

The McGill Institute for the Study of Canada presents a round-table discussion: *Aboriginal Rights in Post-Delgamukw Canada*. 9:30 am to 12:30 pm in Moot Court, Chancellor Day Hall, 3644 Peel St.

Ethics and Public Life Workshop on Religion and Politics in Israel with Professor Harold M. Waller. 10:30 am in Leacock 541

Saturday March 20

Third Annual Youth Music Summit panel discussion in conjunction with International Day For The Elimination Of Racial Discrimination (March 21). 11:30 am to 7 pm at The Medley, 1170 St-Denis. For more info call 790-1245. \$3/day in advance, \$5 at the door.

Monday March 22

The McGill Armenian Association is hosting the third annual symposium on 20th Century Genocides. Lectures begin at 6 pm Monday and 5 pm Tuesday at the Moot Court of the Chancellor Day Hall, 3644 Peel St. for more info call 951-5366

Beyond Political Correctness. A panel discussion on issues of ethnic and racial inclusion in the Canadian academy. 3-5 pm in Leacock 232. for more info call 398-2974

Wednesday March 24

Art Spiegelman, author of *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale* and *Maus II: Here My Troubles Begin*, will be speaking at 7 pm in the Leacock building. Call Luni for info: 845-

9171. Free

Tony Scheumner will be speaking on ecotoxicology of mercury and the environment at Macdonald Campus, R 3045. A teleconference will take place at the Redpath Museum. 3 pm

Ongoing/Upcoming

Mosaica: The McGill Contemporary Dance Ensemble performs March 25-27 and 29-31. 8 pm in Shatner, 3480 McTavish. Students and Seniors, \$6. General admission \$10 call 398-6813

The Gaze, an annual student exhibit run by the Art History Student Organization continues until March 26 in the Art History Department.

Radio On Stage Free live radio drama workshop March 21 to April 3. contact Elvira Truglia 270-6965

Expo 99 - The Student Body. The McGill Physical and Occupational Therapy students presents singing, dancing and comedic skits. March 25 in the Shatner Ballroom, 8 pm. for more info call 284-0244

McGill Centre for Loss and Bereavement is offering support groups free of charge for anyone who is experiencing the loss of a family member or friend. For information, please call 398-7067.

Post-abortion support group. Small open discussion group in a comfortable environment to talk, listen, and receive support from others who have had a similar experience. Meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month. 8:30 pm. Room 423 in Shatner.

Queer McGill's Bi Group runs every Wednesday @ 5:30 p.m. in the

Women's Union (Shatner 423). Come join us!

Queer McGill's Coming Out group runs every Friday @ 5:30 p.m., in the basement of U.T.C. (3521 University St.) Call Queer Line @ 398-6822 for more info.

Queer McGill's Men's Group runs every Friday @ 7:00 p.m. in the basement of U.T.C. (3521 University St.) Call Queer Line @ 398-6822 for more info.

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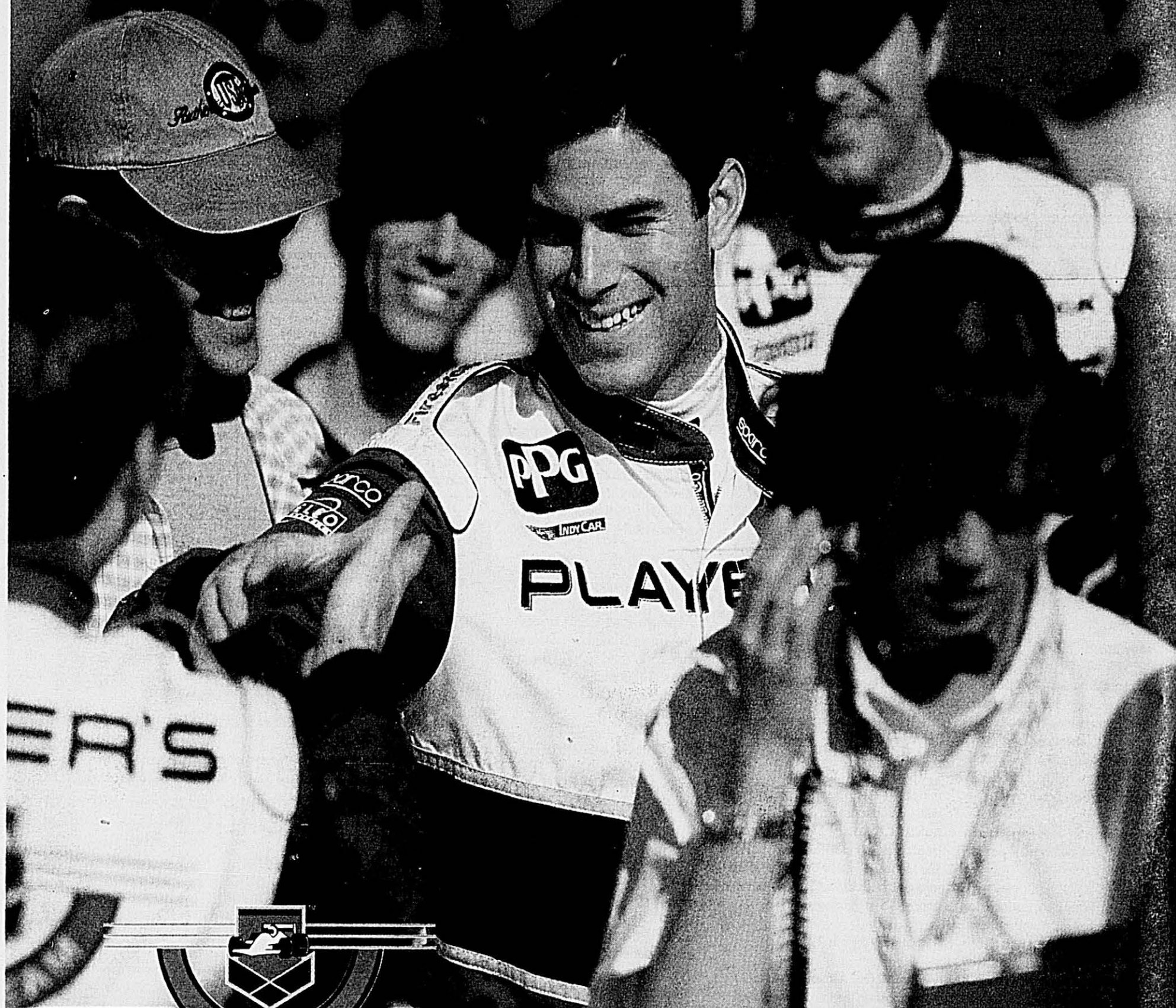
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